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17. ABSTRACT (MAX. 250 WORDS)

In an attempt to improve the quality of instruction, several varieties of educational television have begun in Oklahoma City. In four large elementary schools, half of the pupils' time has been spent in fairly large groups and the other half in smaller, conventional-sized groups. Small groups were used for teaching the 3R's; science, art, music, physical education, and safety were taught in large groups. In the secondary schools, 7th grade scientific geography, 7th grade language arts, and high school chemistry were taught by television.

Results showed that better interaction occurred in small groups than in the typical conventional classrooms. Present demands on the schools to become more effective and more efficient demonstrate the need for upgrading subject matter and reorganizing the curriculum, especially in mathematics, science, foreign language, and the language arts.

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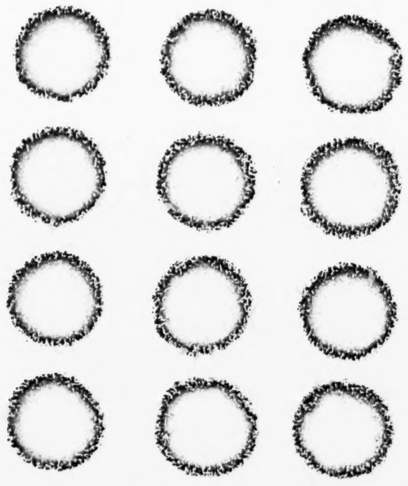
# Large-Group Instruction in Television

My assignment, as you know, is to discuss the experiences that we are having in Oklahoma City with large group instructions by television. To begin, just a word about the background of our efforts with television. It was ten years ago that the State Legislature authorized and provided for a State television authority, which led



to the establishment of a State Board having to do with Educational television, and provided for a transmitter and certain other equipment with which to broadcast.

In 1955 and 1956 the Oklahoma City schools constructed a television studio, in order to make use of the transmitter and other equipment the State authority had provided. We got under way in the summer of 1956 with a very modest experimental program of teaching a course in science and a course in mathematics. At that time the Frontiers of Science Foundation gave us a handsome grant of money with which to carry on because we were operating on a shoestring. A little later the Fund for the Advancement of Education, commonly known as the Ford Foundation, mounted what has been known as the national program in educational television. The Oklahoma City public schools has been a participant in that program for about three and one-half years. We are in our fourth year now. The major part of this effort was completed with a three-year cycle, which involved something over a dozen school systems who were committed to try out certain ideas.

The people who were providing the money were questioning some practices in education — raising some questions that they wanted answered. For one thing, they challenged the idea that a class had to be a certain size, normally, approximately 30 students. They also questioned the idea that one teacher could do anything that another teacher could do; that one teacher was as effective as another teacher. They wanted to ask some questions about the teaching task — what it consists of — whether it is in large measure presentation; whether it is partly administration getting



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together materials, organizing for instruction; whether it is partly guidance, encouraging, motivating, reteaching, getting individual attention, etc. So in order to begin to get some answers to a whole set of questions, we committed ourselves to participate in an experimental project along with a number of other school systems in the country. This has been a very exhilarating experience for the Oklahoma City schools.

For one thing we have had a chance to try money in solving a few problems, which was new, and it has resulted in a

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number of benefits and hidden bonuses that we never suspected. I think, perhaps, it has contributed in some measure to answering the questions that have been raised. I am not sure, however, that the research, or the experimental projects, in those terms ought really to be put in quotes because they normally should be reserved for rigidly planned and rigorously conducted studies, which, I think, none of us have really been able to do; none of us who have been involved in this nationwide program in educational television. To get specific in the large group instruction in Oklahoma City, we have had several varieties. For one thing, we have been experimenting in an organization in four large elementary schools, in which half of the pupils' time has been spent in fairly large groups, and the other half of the pupils' time in smaller and conventional sized groups. We have used the small groups for teaching the three R's, roughly speaking, and we have used the large groups for other kinds of teaching which are commonly found in the elementary curriculum. For example, the teaching of Science, of Social Studies, of Art, Music, Physical Education, Safety, etc.

We have, in the secondary schools, been working with the use of television in large group instruction, several different age groups, and several different subjects. We have taught in seventh grade, and several selected high schools, scientific geography, which is the name by which we call our seventh grade social study program. We have taught in one high school a large group in chemistry by television. We have also taught in seventh grade some large groups in English literature in which we taught the literary aspects of the English — the Language Arts program -- with the use of television. The large majority of you are teachers, and you can see some of the questions that we were raising and some of the things we were getting at.

Now a lot has been said in the national press about the possibilities of large-scale instruction by television as a means of saving money. We have not been primarily concerned with saving money. As a matter of fact in Oklahoma City it has cost money to do the things that we have done. We have been using television in an attempt to improve the quality of instruction. This might seem somewhat contradictory in as much as people usually associate quality with the teaching of small groups — the smaller the better, we have assumed. Some of the outcomes can



in A Symposium on Tomorrow's Teaching held by Frontiers of Science Foundation of Oklahoma, Oklahoma State Dept. of Educ., and the Oklahoma Regents for Higher Education Oklahoma City Jan. 13-14, 1961

briefly be stated. In the first place, such measurements as we have been able to make indicate that the students who have been taught in the large groups have learned, generally, as well as students who have been taught in what we call conventional classrooms. We have seldom found significant differences in favor of either group, but we are safe in concluding, by what we are able to measure, one method is about as good as the other. There have, however, been a number of outcomes that have added to quality instruction. For one thing, we have forced ourselves, as we have worked with these experimental projects, to clarify our goals. It is interesting to note how we so frequently go blithely on, both in public schools, colleges and universities, assuming that we know what we are doing. We know what we are striving for, and we just assume we are getting it.

Some years ago, it was my experience to work for several years as an assistant to the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts of the University of Illinois, during which time I worked with Professors in evaluation of certain undergraduate courses. My job specifically was to formulate, in cooperation with them and others, the comprehensive examination used at the end of the school year. It was necessary, of course, as it always is in building examinations, to know what the Professor was trying to do. So I talked with them. I asked them, "What is your purpose in teaching this philosophy course, this history course, psychology course, zoology course?" One thing everybody will agree to, and say instantly, was that "I teach them to think". But when you ask, "what aspects of the teaching are designed primarily to teach thinking, where do you think you are accomplishing this"— when you ask questions like that, they begin to get very vague. It was almost impossible to tie them down in answers to questions of that sort. The same thing is true of those of us who work in the public schools. We had certain outcomes in mind, that we rather glibly recite, when people ask what we plan to do. When we get right down to the matter of finding out what in our practice is really designed to accomplish these outcomes, we are not nearly so precise and accurate as we ought to be able to be. So, in working with these large group classes, we have forced ourselves to determine what we were trying to do. In our evaluation, of course, we had to measure ourselves in accordance with those purposes. There was an important hidden bonus in it. When we worked on it, we found we were able to uncover many of our own weaknesses. For one thing, the matter of upgrading, a commonly used term these days, subject matter and reorganizing content.

As we worked with chemistry teachers on Saturdays, with the benefit of Ford's money, to decide how we were going to use television, we found out that one thing we needed to do as teachers was to up-date our information about the science of chemistry. In mathematics, we encountered the same sort of thing. As a matter of fact, as a result in working with mathematics on television, some 84 mathematics teachers volunteered to spend one Saturday a month all year to work with outside consultants in order to improve themselves in the content of the subject matter of the discipline they were teaching. Another thing that came out of this — we improved ourselves considerably in our work with group interaction because normally in a large class — in all of our large classes — no student has more than a half-hour of television presentation, which is always followed with group discussion and group activities in smaller-sized numbers. As we gave attention to what we were trying to do, it was necessary for us to work on group dynamic skills, and we had people come to Oklahoma City — men like Herb Feelin from

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the University of Chicago, for example — who worked with our people during the summer on activities and skills of follow-up teaching.

I think it may be safe to say, in spite of the fact that the medium of television places some limitations on teachers, we probably have had in our best examples, where our most skilled people have been working, better interaction in small groups than we had in the typical conventional classroom. I think this is quite possible. This doesn't mean, of course, that it can't happen in the conventional classrooms, but at our present state of advance and in-service development, I don't think it happened in anything like the degree of effectiveness that we have hoped and said that it did. I think, then, my conclusion with respect to that is simply that we get what we strive for. Where there's a will there's a way!

Now I purposely steered away from the statistical results of this because I don't think they are particularly interesting or particularly vital for the sake of this report, and I am going to subside in just a minute so that we might gain a minute or two in this overall morning schedule.

It seems to me that the third and last thing that has been shown to us through the ventures that we have undertaken, is the overwhelming need for us to do more research and to become more research minded. There is money for research these days. There is a great deficiency or shortage of people who are able to conduct it, and to use that money wisely. If there is anything that a school system like Oklahoma City needs, it is more attention to research. We need more people who are able to design and conduct research. We need more of whatever it takes to make us all research minded, so that we will proceed experimentally and thoughtfully in attempting to improve the kind of things that a school system is expected to do.

As we look at the 1960's in the demands that are being made upon the schools to become more effective and more efficient, to provide some of the outcomes that are very much in the minds of the public these days, such as balancing the curriculum, all of the rising expectations of schools with respect to intellectual development and other kinds of roles and clarification of goals, our whole country is becoming increasingly goal minded. As a matter of fact the eleven men commissioned that the President appointed has tied in very nicely with the number of efforts on the part of national groups asking, "What are the goals of the public schools, total goals, overall goals, as well as goals with respect to particular subjects."

Reorganization of content that must come about, particularly in certain fields, but in some measure in all fields, mathematics and science, foreign language and language arts — in all of these and the tremendous in-service job that we had to do, not only in order to catch up, to overcome a lag that obviously exists in our preparation as well as everybody else, but in order to keep current, and to keep growing a way in which all of us who work in the public schools will have to, I think, there is great promise and possibility in some of these newer means of teaching, television, of course, being one among many.

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